

## Senate Question Period

January 14, 2013

Submitted by Senator Fachinger

### **Question regarding communication between Senate and Queen's Aboriginal Council**

What does the Principal intend to do to improve communication between Senate and the Aboriginal Council of Queen's University (ACQU)?

#### *Background:*

Senators do not seem to have been informed about the 2012 ACQU meetings (which are open to the public) and relevant discussions. As a first step, granting a Senator observer status at ACQU meetings might improve communication. Also, it is not clear to most Senators how the ACQU works and what its decision making power is. Most Senators do not know if Senators, ex officio members, guests, and observers who *are* members of the ACQU are authorized to speak on behalf of the Aboriginal Council and/or on behalf of the Aboriginal communities at Queen's. Moreover, Senators need to know if any motions dealing with Aboriginal issues submitted to Senate require previous approval by the ACQU. In other words, Senate needs a structure and a protocol to deal with matters pertaining to Aboriginal education to protect the democratic process and to facilitate a safe and respectful environment. The flow of communication and the decolonization of the institution and the curriculum would be greatly improved if the ACQU were made an integral part of the Queen's decision making structure as the Academic Plan recommends.

#### **Answer provided by the Provost**

As the Principal's delegate to the Aboriginal Council of Queen's University (ACQU), I am responding on his behalf to this question.

The ACQU was established in 1992 and is mandated to be involved in all decisions affecting Aboriginal programs and services at Queen's and to provide advice to the university, while being mindful of "the legitimate interests of the institution ... in respect of the authority it has over academic programs and in respect of the rights of the Board of Trustees to appoint employees and to approve budgets." The Council works to ensure that the institution is responsive to the broader needs of Aboriginal peoples.

The provincial government requires every university and college to have such a council "to be eligible for public funding to support Aboriginal students and programming related to Aboriginal education in their institutions." Queen's University reports annually to the government on its investments in Aboriginal education, which are developed under the ACQU's direction, and subject to its approval.

The ACQU meets three times per year, and its activities for 2012 are outlined in an annual report that will be endorsed by the ACQU in January for submission to Senate in February, and to the Board of Trustees in March. This practice of annual reporting will continue in subsequent years.

The ACQU currently has three working groups. A proposal for an Aboriginal Studies Minor has been developed by one of the working groups and was unanimously endorsed by Council at its meeting in November. This proposal will come to Senate in the next few months.

More information about the ACQU is available from its [website](#). Additionally, news stories about the Council's activities are posted to the Queen's News Centre and sent to all faculty and staff via e-Queen's. There were three such stories in 2012.

The ACQU membership currently includes four individuals who are members of Senate or attend its meetings, and two of these individuals also attend all Board of Trustees meetings.